

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LIBREV 02051 271915Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 MCT-02 ACDA-12 EB-08 COME-00

TRSE-00 OMB-01 SY-05 OPR-02 A-01 /124 W

-----105925 271922Z /50

P R 271535Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1425

INFO AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION GENEVA

USICA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2051

KINSHASA FOR RSO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM

SUBJECT: BENINESE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY IN GABON

REF: (A) LIBREVILLE 2022; (B) LIBREVILLE 2038

1. SUMMARY: LIBREVILLE'S "L'UNION" OF JULY 26 RELEGATED
REPATRIATION OF BENINESE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY TO PAGE FOUR,
PERHAPS AS PART OF GOG WISH THAT CALM BE RESTORED. MANY
BENINESE ARE BEING HELD AT SCHOOL ON EDGE OF LIBREVILLE IN
ANTICIPATION OF REPATRIATION/DEPORTATION; HOWEVER, THERE
ARE REPORTS THAT EXCEPTIONS ARE BEING MADE. EMBOFF PER-
SONALLY SAW AREAS WHERE DAMAGE TO BENINESE-OWNED HOMES AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LIBREV 02051 271915Z

BUSINESS WAS MOST ACUTE. END SUMMARY.

2. LIBREVILLE JULY 26 "L'UNION" CARRIES PAGE FOUR ARTICLE
ENTITLED "PROGRESSIVE RETURN TO CALM" ABOUT BENINESE
EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY IN GABON. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE,
MOST SEVERE DISTRUBANCE HAD TAKEN PLACE DURING NIGHT OF
JULY 24, WHEN HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALS, NOT FURTHER

IDENTIFIED, HAD ATTACKED BENINESE-OWNED BUILDING NEAR MONT BOUET MARKET. POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENT INTERVENED WITH FIRE HOSES AND SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. ATTACK WAS REPELLED AND BUILDING REMAINED INTACT, EXCEPT FOR BROKEN WINDOWS. ONE OTHER INCIDENT WAS MENTIONED IN ARTICLE, THAT OF ONE BENINESE WHO HAD ATTEMPTED TO RETURN TO HIS HOME TO RECOVER BELONGINGS AND WAS GIVEN POLICE PROTECTION TO ENABLE HIM TO DO SO.

3. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, MORE THAN FIVE THOUSAND BENINESE ARE BEING LODGED TEMPORARILY AT LYCEE D'ETAT DE L'ESTUAIRE, NEAR AIRPORT ON MAIN ROAD, AND ARE BEING GIVEN POLICE PROTECTION AS WELL AS ANY REQUIRED MEDICAL ATTENTION BY GENDARMERIE NATIONALE. SOME 250 BENINESE ARE BEING HELD/PROTECTED IN SCHOOLS IN LAMBARENE.

4. SAME ISSUE OF PAPER ALSO CONTAINS TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE BROADCAST EVENING OF JULY 25 TO EFFECT THAT ALL VEHICLES BELONGING TO BENINESE ARE TO BE TAKEN TO OWENDO GENDARMERIE SCHOOL AS PART OF EFFORT TO QUOTE INSURE REPATRIATION OF BENINESE UNDER BEST POSSIBLE CONDITIONS UNQUOTE. THUS, PRIVATELY ARRANGED SALES OF VEHICLES OWNED BY BENINESE TO THIRD PARTIES ARE NO LONGER PERMISSIBLE.

5. EMBOFF HEARD REPORT LATE TUESDAY, JULY 25, THAT MINISTER OF NATIONAL POLICE, YOUTH, AND SPORTS ASSELE, WHO IS ALSO MADAME BONGO'S BROTHER, HAD MET WITH TEACHERS IN LIBREVILLE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LIBREV 02051 271915Z

AREA, MOST OF WHOM ARE MENINESE, AND HAD ANNOUNCED DECISION TO GRANT THEM LEGAL REFUGEE STATUS IN GABON, THUS EXEMPTING THEM FROM REPATRIATION.

6. THIS MORNING EMBOFF TOURED LIBREVILLE'S CENTRAL MARKET AREA (MONT BOUET) AND OBSERVED EXTENSIVE DESTRUCTION CAUSED DURING WEEKEND DISTURBANCES. ROUGHLY 80 PERCENT OF MARKET HAD BEEN LOOTED AND/OR STALLS BURNT OUT. REFUSE AND CHARRED REMAINS OF BURNT STALLS AND SHOPS TOTALLY SURROUNDED CONCRETE CENTRAL MARKET STRUCTURE. ONLY COMMERCE BEING CONDUCTED WAS SALE OF AFRICAN STAPLE FOODS BY ITINERANT MERCHANTS. NEITHER CLOTH NOR MANUFACTURED GOODS WERE IN EVIDENCE.

7. DESTRUCTION APPEARED TO BE VERY SELECTIVE. SHOPS OF LEBANESE MERCHANTS IN IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF CENTRAL MARKET WERE NOT TOUCHED. APPARENTLY CROWD HAD BEEN UNDER SOME CONTROL AND DIRECTION, ALTHOUGH IN SOME AREAS TELEPHONE LINES HAD BEEN TORN DOWN. THROUGHOUT OTHER SECTIONS OF CITY SINGLE SHOPS AND RESIDENCES OWNED BY BENINESE WERE GUTTED WITH LITTLE OR NO DAMAGE TO ADJOINING STRUCTURES.

8. WHILE MARKET WAS NOT BUSTLING, NEITHER WAS IT DESERTED.

BETWEEN LEBANESE SHOPS AND AFRICAN SIDEWALK VENDORS, IT APPEARS STAPLES ARE STILL AVAILABLE. THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGES. ONE OF LIBREVILLE'S LARGEST BAKERIES, WHICH HAD BEEN RUN BY BENINESE, HAS ALMOST TOTALLY SHUT DOWN. A WELL-INFORMED LOCAL EMPLOYEE REPORTED THAT GOG HAD ALREADY ORDERED SOME BENINESE WITH SPECIALTIES--SUCH AS BAKERS--TO BE RELEASED FROM DETENTION. SAME SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT GOOD PERCENTAGE OF BENINESE WILL LEAVE GABON AFTER LOST SO MUCH. APPARENTLY SOME ARE SELLING THEIR CARS AND TRUCKS FOR LITTLE MORE THAN PRICE OF PLANE TICKET TO BENIN OR IVORY COAST.

9. DURING PREVIOUS UNRELATED VISIT TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS, EMBOFF WITNESSED DOZEN PEOPLE BEING HEARDED INTO POLICE VAN BY POLICE WHO WERE OBVIOUSLY DRUNK AND IN HOSTILE MOOD.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 LIBREV 02051 271915Z

10. COMMENT: IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHAT EFFECT REPATRIATION OF BENINESE, IF IT DOES PROCEED IN TOTALLITY, WILL HAVE ON ECONOMY OF GABON, EXCEPT THAT IN SHORT TERM SMALL-SCALE COMMERCE IN CERTAIN QUARTIERS WILL BE HAMPERED. WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS THAT SOME BENINESE HAVE ALREADY BEEN REPATRIATED AND THAT MANY MORE ARE PLANNING TO LEAVE, BUT THERE REMAINS DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT GOG WILL BACK DOWN AND WILL MAKE SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF EXCEPTIONS TO REPATRIATION DECISION, AS IN CASE WITH TEACHERS AND THOSE WITH NECESSARY SKILLS. TIENKEN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPATRIATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LIBREV02051
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780308-0929
Format: TEL
From: LIBREVILLE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780715/aaaaambe.tel
Line Count: 146
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: cd39d76b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 LIBREVILLE 2022, 78 LIBREVILLE 2038
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1869656
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BENINESE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY IN GABON
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/cd39d76b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014